USDI, Bureau of Land Management
Three Rivers Resource Area, Burns District

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR
EAST DAVIES ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

OR-03-025-043

INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment (EA) was completed to analyze the effects of implementing the Allotment Management Plan (AMP) for the East Davies Allotment # 5223. The East Davies Allotment is located approximately 36 miles southeast of Burns, Oregon. This area is characterized by sagebrush grasslands and juniper sagebrush grasslands. The East Davies evaluation completed in 2003 determined that management within the allotment (portions of the Lower Pasture) did not meet the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in the States of Oregon and Washington. Therefore, it is proposed to change livestock management to a grazing plan which would provide sustainable livestock grazing and promote rangeland health.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed livestock grazing management system in the Lower Pasture would change to winter use with spring use occurring 1 out of 4 years. The Balkan Basin Pasture would be grazed within the dates of April 1 to July 15 for years one and two, and from September 1 to March 31 years three and four. The Reservoir Pasture would be grazed with the same general season of use as the Balkan Basin Pasture, but would be grazed in the opposite rotation of the Balkan Basin Pasture. Livestock would only be allowed to graze within the Lower, Balkan Basin, and Reservoir Pastures up to 6 weeks within the general season of use described above. The Head of Beaver Creek Pasture would be managed with the permittee's private land within the general season of March 1 to December 31. There are only 10 acres of public land within the Head of Beaver Creek Pasture.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

This proposal is in conformance with objectives and land use plan allocations in the 1992 Three Rivers Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). It is in conformance with the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management for Public Lands Administered by the BLM in the States of Oregon and Washington (August 12, 1997.) Based on the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA and all other information, it was determined that the proposed action and alternatives analyzed do not constitute a major Federal action that would significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an EIS is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Rationale:

This determination is based on the following: The following critical elements of the human environment have been analyzed in the Three Rivers RMP/Final EIS, and are not known to be present in the project area or affected by enacting either alternative: Air Quality, Water Quality (surface/grounds), Wetlands and Riparian Zones, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concerns, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Prime Farmlands, Paleontology, Floodplains or Hazardous Materials, and American Indian Traditional Practices. The following critical element is not discussed in the Three Rivers RMP/EIS, but is either not known to be present or affected: Environmental Justice. All potentially affected resources were analyzed in the EA specific to the proposed action. The following resources were analyzed in the EA: Cultural Resources, Migratory Birds, Special Status Species, and Noxious Weeds. Effects to these resources are considered nonsignificant (based on the definition of significance in 40 CFR 1508.27) for the following reasons:

Cultural Resources

The proposed AMP would change the grazing time from summer to winter/early spring. This timing will distribute livestock more evenly over the allotment and use of the uplands should be greater than under a summer grazing system. Winter/early spring grazing can result in more widespread trampling effects in the uplands due to the soft soils at that time of the year. However, the intensity of effects on cultural resources allotmentwide is likely to be lower under the proposed grazing system.

Migratory Birds

Several species of migratory birds are known to use the allotment for nesting, foraging, and resting as they pass through on their yearly migrations. The reduced grazing during the nesting season would reduce disturbance to nesting migratory birds. This would result in fewer disturbances of nests, nestlings, and fledglings and would be beneficial when compared to current management. The winter grazing in the Lower Pasture is also expected to improve range condition in the pasture.

Special Status Species

There are no known Federally listed Threatened or Endangered wildlife or plant species found within the allotment. Greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus phaois*) are expected to occur in the allotment. There are no known lek sites within the allotment or in the general area around the allotment. Sage-grouse would benefit from the expected improvement in range condition. There are no known Special Status plants within the allotment.

Noxious Weeds

The Lower Pasture has some major noxious weed issues. Due to its proximity to State Highway 78, new weed introductions are highly likely. The following noxious weeds have been found and treated in this pasture: diffuse knapweed, medusahead, whitetop, and perennial pepperweed.

The proposed grazing system should maintain vigorous, competitive plant communities which would be more resistant to noxious weed introduction and spread.

Range

a. Vegetation

Upland conditions would improve as plants are given an opportunity to reproduce and gain vigor under the proposed action.

b. Soils

The proposed grazing management would provide for stable conditions or an increase in ground cover which would prevent accelerated erosion.

Grazing Management

Grazing management would combine winter use with a rotation of early season grazing, growing season grazing, and incorporating growing season rest. The maintenance of the plant community composition and improvement in vigor and condition of the plants could increase forage value on the allotment with associated weight gains for the livestock.

Wildlife

Grazing management to enhance native perennial vegetation would enhance critical mule deer winter range, and sage-grouse habitat in the area.

Recreation and Visual Resources

There would be no change in the visual aspects of the area. Hunting opportunities would not be affected by the proposed action. Upland and riparian areas visual aspects will be improved by improved vegetation through grazing management. Off Highway Vehicle use would not be affected.

_____ _____

Joan M. Suther Date
Three Rivers Resource Area Field Manager